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NEA/ARP FOR GREG BEHRMAN OF POLICY PLANNING STAFF

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TAGS: PREL KISL SCUL SOCI KU
SUBJECT: EMBASSY KUWAIT'S PROMOTION OF DIALOGUE WITH MUSLIM
WORLD

REF: A. STATE 71325
1B. KUWAIT 571
1C. KUWAIT 573
1D. KUWAIT 560
1E. KUWAIT 426

11. (U) Summary. Regarding Ref A's tasking on the Consultative Process for Muslim Engagement, future events planned by Embassy Kuwait include the following five programs:
-- Arab-American Science Partnership
-- Alternative Energy Applications Conference
-- American Diwaniya
-- Food for Thought Ambassador-Youth program
-- Ghabka Celebration

(U) Past/continuing programs executed by Embassy Kuwait include:

-- Ambassador Jones' op-ed and interviews to promote President Obama's speech and its message of USG-Muslim dialogue.
-- A "moot court" exercise in collaboration with the American University of Kuwait
-- A "Muslim Students in America" TV segment in collaboration with the local Al-Rai television company
-- An "Amish in America tour" for a Kuwaiti journalist

End Summary.

Arab-American Science Partnership

12. (U) Embassy believes that the proposed Arab-American Science Partnership (AASP), developed by Embassy Amman's ESTH Hub Office, has relevant synergies with the S&T initiatives articulated in the President's Cairo speech (septel). The AASP has significant potential to address the many deficiencies in MENA S&T capacity, all of which have an impact on economic development. As home to the respected Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) and Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), Kuwait would be an important component of such a partnership. The proposed AASP's benefits extend beyond science to also support U.S. political, economic, and security interests through a new two-way public diplomacy platform based on American S&T leadership, which is widely admired in the MENA region.

Alternative Energy Applications Conference

13. (U) The November 2-6 Alternative Energy Applications Conference in Kuwait -- held under the patronage of the Amir -- represents an opportunity to bolster S&T ties between the USG and MENA Governments. Many MENA energy ministers will be

in attendance, together with 3,000 to 4,000 attendees from both the private and public sectors. Embassy is engaging DOE to encourage high-level USG participation.

American Diwaniya

¶4. (U) A dormant Embassy Kuwait program which we hope to revivify is the American Diwaniya. (A diwaniya is a traditional salon-style evening gathering which usually serves as a forum for Kuwaiti politicking.) In the past, the Embassy held the weekly diwaniya at an EmbOff's residence and invited several dozen Kuwaiti contacts. The EmbOff furnished one or his/her rooms like a traditional Kuwaiti diwaniya with low couches lining the inside and had the usual diwaniya refreshments served: tea, Arabian coffee, juice, and dates. The American Diwaniya was popular among many Kuwaitis because it both showed an appreciation for their customs and because we were taking the time to create a forum in which they could feel at home. While this program lapsed as a consequence of poor attendance in recent years, we now believe the public mood has shifted and that the desire for dialogue articulated by the President in his Cairo speech has created an opening that will allow us to re-engage in the Fall.

Food for Thought Ambassador-Youth program

¶5. (U) "Food for Thought: Keeping a Pulse on the Kuwaiti
KUWAIT 00000754 002 OF 003

Youth" is an initiative that will bring Ambassador Jones into contact with Kuwaiti youth through unannounced and informal trips to local, culinary hotspots. Conversations will focus on the perspectives of the youth and will revolve around numerous topics including the future of Kuwait, education, and employment opportunities, personal growth, and other similar issues that are relevant to Kuwaiti youth.

Ghabka Celebration

¶6. (U) On September 7, Post will host a ghabka (Arabic: "banquet") Ramadan celebration, which will give officers at Post an opportunity to meet with various representatives from Kuwait's student and youth organizations, in addition to media and cultural figures.

PREVIOUS EFFORTS

Ambassador Jones' op-ed and interviews to promote POTUS speech

¶7. (U) Since the POTUS speech on June 4, Post undertook several efforts to enhance dialogue with Kuwait's Muslim community (Refs B and C):

-- Prior to the President's speech, the Ambassador pre-recorded an interview for Al-Watan TV about the messages in the speech; the interview was then aired on the evening of June 4.

-- On the day of the President's speech, the Ambassador met with columnists and editors of local newspapers to promote further dialogue.

-- Following the speech, the Ambassador wrote an op-ed -- which was later published by six Kuwaiti dailies -- highlighting the salience of the speech's points.

-- EmbOffs solicited input from their contacts for reactions to the speech. Most contacts responded that the speech was a good start but the President is on the hook to follow up his nice words with actions, especially vis-a-vis Arab-Israeli peace and settlements (Ref D).

The Moot Court

¶ 8. (U) USG-funding helped develop an American University of Kuwait (AUK) "Rhetoric of Cultural Dissonance" course aimed at countering the influence of extremists among Muslim and Arab youth (Refs E and F). During the "moot court" exercise, the culmination of the course, students role-play the prosecution, defense, and jury in a terrorism trial. On trial is not just the accused, but Kuwaiti students' preconceptions of terrorism, religious duty, civil rights, and democratic freedoms. This groundbreaking course and the "moot court" exercise are examples of Muslim engagement programming designed to give young people the intellectual and rhetorical tools to counter extremist ideologies. The local media response demonstrated an openness to discussion and debate of these issues in Kuwaiti society. Ambassador Jones, present at the final session, added her own endorsement of the class and praise for the seriousness and enthusiasm of the students in a short segment that will be added to the video record of the proceedings. Post thanks Washington for funding previously provided and is confident that with additional USG funding and encouragement the course can be rolled out to other universities in Kuwait and in the region to foster the sense of dialogue and partnership outlined in President Obama's Cairo speech.

"Muslim Students in America" TV segment

¶ 9. (U) The State Department's "Muslim Students in America" Cooperative Program with the local Al-Rai television company will produce an hour-long segment to be broadcast in Kuwait which will show how Muslim Kuwaiti students in the U.S. are able to balance faith and regular college life. The segment's goal is to encourage Muslim Kuwaiti students to study in the U.S. Embassy Kuwait's Public Affairs Section will be working through the National Union of Kuwaiti Students-USA to set up the filming of these segments and will

KUWAIT 00000754 003 OF 003

thus use it as a mechanism to further generate the discourse and dialogue of the President's speech.

"Amish in America tour"

¶ 10. (U) In the "Amish in America" program, Embassy Kuwait gave a reporter from moderate Arabic-language daily Al-Qabas exclusive and unprecedented access to the Amish community in America, resulting in a two-part series in Al-Qabas newspaper on Amish life and how a conservative and relatively isolated religious group in America is able to peacefully co-exist with individuals of all faiths. The story ran in Al-Qabas, complete with photos, on July 7 and July 8.

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JONES